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ABSTRACT

In March 1989, a new program was started in the middle hills area of Nepal. A community-based child development project entered the community by concentrating first on the children, and starting in one small area, and extending to new village areas in subsequent years. As of March 1993, there were four Village Development Areas participating in such activities as child care (both home- and center-based), functional adult literacy classes, non-formal education for girls, mothers' and fathers' groups, child-to-child education, a women's self-help center, training of primary level school teachers, and installation of water systems. This account of the work of the Community Based Child Development Project of Lamjung District of Nepal is not an evaluation or exhaustive documentation of the work, but a descriptive account of the program and some of its effects on the community, including reflections on the project by community members and project staff. Chapters include: (1) "What Do Children Need? The Children Speak"; (2) "Children in Change"; (3) "Women in Change"; (4) "Fathers in Change"; (5) "Lower Caste Groups in Change"; (6) "Village Life in Change"; (7) "School and Teachers in Change"; (8) "What Is Good Child Development?"; and (9) "Lessons Learnt." Two appendices present objectives and activity descriptions of the development project. (EV)

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WINDS OF CHANGE

Reflections on Community Based Child Development in Nepal

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WINDS OF CHANGE

Reflections on Community Based Child Development in Nepal

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FOREWORD

During the mid to late 1980's *Children* became a much stronger focus in Redd Barna's strategy than previously. Prior to the mid-80's community development and participatory community development were Redd Barna's main activities in Asia. 'Services' were not 'in'. In spite of the participatory community development projects, the organization also found that community development and the 'trickle down theory' did not help children quickly enough. Many children suffered un-necessarily due to a strategy which had not proven itself to reach children as effectively and timely.

Could one do community development using the child as an entry point? We were quite certain that the mothers would be willing to support the new strategy, - but what about the powerful in the village, - the high caste, and the men, the politicians?

In *"Winds of Change"* Dr. Chris Wright is telling us what happened, and that our fear were groundless. It is not a project without fault, but it is a description of a group of Nepalese women and a community who believed in the model, and did not give up.

I am pleased and proud to have a little part in the development of the children's project which started in Bharte village in Lamjung district in Nepal. The way it is described by Chris Wright shows the resilience amongst children and women, and fathers' curiosity and willingness to learn. First and foremost it is a document saluting the hardworking and concerned Nepali mothers and their willingness to listen and learn for the benefit of their children. They deserve the applause for the winds of change!

Bangkok, Thailand
March 1995

Bengt Ageros
Regional Director

AUTHOR'S NOTES

In March 1989, a new program was born in a middle hills area of Nepal. A Community Based Child Development Project, entered the community through the children, and starting in one small area it has extended to new village areas each year since then. Activities too have extended gradually, but considerably. Now, in March 1993, four years later, four Village Development Areas are involved in the project, and activities include child care (both home-based and child care centres); functional adult literacy classes; non-formal education for girls; mothers' groups, and fathers' groups; child-to-child education; a women's self help centre; credit schemes; training of primary level school teachers; and installation of water systems.

This account of the work of the Community Based Child Development Project of Lamjung District of Nepal is ***not*** an evaluation of this program. Nor is it an exhaustive documentation of the work. Rather, it is a descriptive account of the program and some of the effects on the community with reflections on it from community members, the project staff, and the author: written in the hope that those working at project level in other places may find this a stimulus to consider not only the effects

and issues of this Lamjung program, but also the possible applications and effects of such an approach in their own areas and cultures. As far as possible I have worked from the opinions and observations of the community themselves, and for this reason have used their reflections directly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped me in this work. In particular I want to thank the staff of the Lamjung Community Based Child Development Project who have warmly welcomed me and given me every assistance in each of my field trips there. Sangeeta Shrestha, the Project In-charge, introduced me to the project and gave me much of her time for discussion and clarification: Bishnu Maya Thapa, Sangeeta Premi K.C., Chameli Gurung, and Sunita Sherpa, all Child Development Workers, introduced me to their field areas and activities and facilitated my discussions and interviews with community members: Ramesh Adhikari, Project Administrative Assistant, helped me in my interviewing in Bharate Village. Mrs. Agatha Thapa, Director of Seto Gurans in Kathmandu, gave me time to discuss Seto Gurans' involvement in planning and training in the project, and her views of child development work. Also in In Kathmandu, Tone Lauvdal and Kumari Sauden of Redd Barna Office organized my field trips: and Mrs. Gyani Devi Sharma and Mr. Tumburu Gautam spent many hours transcribing interview tapes and typing the manuscript. The illustrations are the work of Mr. Kalyan Rai.

Dr. Bengt Ageros, Regional Director of Redd Barna in Asia, commissioned this work: and along with Sangeeta Shrestha and Agatha Thapa, in 1988 and 1989, dreamed and planned this project.

However, most especially, my thanks go to the many people of Lamjung District - men, women, and children - who have spent time with me in their homes, in their meetings, in their schools or just on the path, to discuss this work of Child Development in their area that *they* themselves are achieving.

JHUMA.....

Jhuma is about 28 years old. Like many women in this area she is not quite sure of her exact age. She grew up in a village more than a day's walk from her present home, and one of her brothers still lives there with his wife and family though her parents have now died. Her other brother moved to Kathmandu. Jhuma had no schooling, and when she was still a child her parents arranged her marriage to the son of a local rich family - only possible because her husband was retarded and dumb, and so could not find a wife from a family of a similar economic standard. Jhuma was deeply unhappy, frequently running away from her husband's home, and begged her parents to allow her to stay again with them. She says "I was rich, but surely you must ***like*** your husband? I did not care if whoever I married was not in the army, or was only a plough-man for other people - I just wanted someone I could ***like*** ...."

Eventually her parents relented, and news spread in the area of her failed marriage. About 10 years ago her present husband was working for a richer family in their present village - and his landlady heard of Jhuma, and wanted to arrange their marriage. Jhuma liked him, though he was poor and hisfather had died when he was young, leaving his mother with young children and no support - so that they

had moved from relative to relative. Jhuma and her husband were lucky. His employers - "social workers" to many in the village, - arranged their marriage, gave them a small piece of land and helped them build a simple house. Since then they have lived from the land and from both working for others in the village (planting rice, harvesting, and making millet whisky) for which they are paid at harvest time in rice, maize and millet. Now they have 2 children, a 6 year old daughter and a 3 year old son, both born at home with Jhuma alone and no antenatal or birth care available. What has the project meant to Jhuma and her family? She herself recounts:

"In the beginning of the training for mothers for HBCCC it was very difficult. I was frightened - it was completely new for me. I did not know any Nepali language - how could I learn or speak if I did not know Nepali? What if didi forced me to speak Nepali? I used to shake, and be so anxious. I never went to school - if I had, maybe I would not have had all the problems in my life. I felt, how can I learn anything?

"But now I can speak some Nepali, and with my children too. I like to meet others who speak Nepali - I enjoy it. My children have benefitted greatly from HBCCC - they are clean, they are toilet trained, they wash their hands before they eat. We mothers have also changed! Our personal hygiene has changed. Sometimes it was two or three months between baths, but now women feel we must wash, its important. Also it is important to clean our houses. My son already knows how to play with the toys at HBCCC - he knows the names of different colors. He can play well with other children too - he does not quarrel or cry, as he did before. It makes me so happy...

"I get a lot of encouragement from my husband. He himself told me I should study, and I did not even know at first that he had put my name down for the FALC. But I told him that I am too old to learn to read and write, I will not be able to do it. He gave me examples of women older than I who are learning and took me to the class: he looks after the children when I am there. He himself knows Nepali but he also has not studied. But I came top in the first 6 months classes! I can read and write my name, our family name - I, who could not read or write before! Now I am in the second class.... I have only missed one class in all that time.

"In our village now we have toilets. People used to say "Why not do it anywhere?", if we talked. Now the thinking has changed.

"My husband has changed too. These days he also washes the children, and really encourages them to learn. He is very happy. He goes to fathers' classes, and talks to me about the classes when he comes home. Sometimes he will say "Kanchhi asked this today: I did not know the answer. Do you? "And then he jokes that he got the answer from Jhuma! So the men benefit from us women learning....

"He used to drink a lot, and then sometimes he would get crazy.... It was my daughter who heard that drinking should be controlled gradually. She heard it in her childrens' class and told him... Now he has cut right down, he does not get drunk any more. The men did not have discipline before - they used to be bad mannered in joking with the girls. But these days they are more disciplined, its under control. I know I should not make whisky for them. I tell Kanchhi (C.D. worker) - "Do not look now, I am going to sell whisky". But what to do? I have to sell it.....

"Now we know we must build latrines, we must teach our children. Before I felt how can I learn anything? Now I know I too have learnt, I too can learn..... ."

INTRODUCTION

Lamjung district lies in the beautiful middle hills area of Nepal. Ridge after ridge of forested or terraced hill slopes look out to the spectacular snowy peaks of Lamjung Himal and the Annapurnas. Terraces have been painstakingly cut into the slopes, and maintained over generations, supporting maize and millet as the main crops, with occasional rice where water is available for irrigation. Red poinsettia bushes and the bright yellow mustard seed flowers bring flashes of color to the hillsides in the winter, and in the mònsoon season all turns a lush green. Small villages occupy ridge tops or open spaces on the slopes, and as the villages grow-and the population - so the forest thins and recedes,.... and wood for fuel and building becomes an increasing problem. Villages blend with their surroundings, except for the shiny tin roofs that mark out the richer families' houses.

There is one dirt road leading to the district centre of Lamjung from the main Kathmandu to Pokhara road that traverses the next district: and from this dirt road it is a further three hours walk steeply up hill to the start of the project area. In the wet season this dirt road may be impassable to vehicles, and then it is a one day walk to the

main road. Within the project area villages are connected by steep paths up and down the river valley sides. As one community leader said "This place has been like an island, -remote and ignorant about the outside world".

In reality however, there has been much movement to and from this area. A large number of men join the army for work, spending maybe twenty-five or thirty years away

from home, usually in India, with only infrequent visits to their villages. Their salaries, and later their pensions, have been much sought after, and all families in the area want their daughters to marry an army-man - so insuring economic stability and security. This migratory pattern has had many effects on family life and on the children in terms of contact with their fathers: but most households contain an extended family with grand-fathers or other male figures to partially fill the gap. Interestingly, despite these mens' opportunity to see other more developed areas in the course of their work and travels, prior to the start of this Project these villages had virtually no toilets, no kitchen gardens, no secondary schooling: and the only water systems were those installed by the British Army Welfare Scheme.

The people of this area are a mixture of Mongoloid Gurung and Tamang peoples, with Aryan neighbours of different castes: Brahmin, Chhetri, Biswakarma, and other lower caste groups; but the Gurung influence is predominant in many of the villages. The culture is rich: festivals and rituals abound: and there are several different languages and dialects. Although Nepali is the country's "lingua franca" many women and children in this area do not speak it.

The life of many in this area is a matter of subsistence, and for the women especially, a hard daily routine of household work, carrying water, child care, and field work which extends from early morning to late at night. Child care is also frequently carried out by older siblings in the family while the mother works. Infant mortality rates are high in Nepal - estimated at 105 per 1000 by the Population Task Force; with a high population growth rate also - 2.1% (women and children in Nepal 1992): but literacy rates are

low - a total literacy rate of 36.4% in 1989, with rural womens' literacy rate being around 10% only (Demographic Sample Survey, First Report, M.O.E.C.). Lamjung is no exception to these trends. Modern medical care services are minimal - there is one government Health Post several hours walk away where villagers complain that medicines are often not available; or a one to two day walk away there is a small mission hospital in a neighbouring district. Traditional healers abound, with several in each village, and they are the primary source of health care. Until the Community Based Child Development Project started, no other International Non-Governmental Organisation was involved in development work in this area, nor any other child development program, - and indeed these were criteria in selecting the project area.

The Community Based Child Development Project was planned as an integrated, community development program, with the child as the entry point to the community.

The choice of the working area was partly determined by the decision of the Government of Nepal as to the areas Redd Barna would be allowed to work in, and partly by initial discussions with the Lumjung District Political Officer and other local leaders. The people of one village, Bharte, then invited Redd Barna to start work in their area. In 1989 approximately half of the Bharte Village Development Committee Area was covered: and in 1990 the area was extended to the rest of Bharte. Two further Village Development Committees Areas were included in 1991, and a further two in 1992, making the current population covered around 15,000. In 1993 a further one Village Development Committee area is being included. Initial discussions in each village area covered explanation

of the project basis, and its objectives and resources: and discussion of the community's expectations, desires and resources. These discussions continued for about six months on average before any activities were started, and then only after consensus had been reached in understanding about the project. Frequently the community's initial expectations have been for donor activities on the part of Project staff - building rice mills, and water systems, initiating credit schemes etc. : whereas Redd Barna's response has been that all activities remain the property and responsibility of the community, and the project input will be limited to certain clearly defined areas. For instance, for child care centres, the community is responsible for providing the building and choosing the teacher: Redd Barna is responsible for the teacher's monthly salary for a defined period of time (five years) and for their training, and for a kit box of toys and other materials for each Child Care Centre. For water systems the community provides the labour for porterage and for digging of the channels for pipes, as well as being responsible to set up and run a Water Users Committee to oversee and manage the installation and ongoing maintenance of the system. Only then does Redd Barna provide pipes, cement if needed, and a technical supervisor. So with each activity initial discussions and understandings have been crucial in defining the community's and the project's roles. These discussions are also ongoing. As discussions were initiated in each project area, so an initial survey was also carried out by project staff, where questions were asked to each house regarding the family size and composition, sanitation, land ownership, water, fire wood supply, health care, nutrition in pregnancy etc. Family members also expressed their opinions as to their needs, and the survey was used to not only inform the project staff, but also to give information back to the village.

On the basis of these discussions communities have then initiated gradually some, or all, of the following activities, with the support of the project:

* Home Based Child Care Centres (HBCCC)
* Child Care Centres (CCC)
* Parent Education Classes (Mothers' Groups and Fathers' Groups)
* Child to Child Education
* Functional Adult Literacy Classes
* Functional Literacy Classes for Teenage Girls
* Nutrition Activities
* Income Generation Activities
* Water Systems and Sanitation
* Teacher Training for Primary School Teachers
* A Self Help Centre for Women

How many of these activities have been implemented, and their order of implementation, has varied from village to village, according to the motivation and organisation of the community. In general, Home Based Child Care Centres and latrine building have been starting activities: mothers'

classes have usually predated fathers' classes by at least several months: and water system schemes have occurred in some areas and not others to date. Details about each of these activities and their organisation are given in APPENDIX II.

WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED? THE CHILDREN SPEAK.....

When Children in Lumjung were asked what they felt they and their little brothers and sisters needed for good development, perhaps even more significant than ***what*** they said was that almost every child asked ***had something*** to say. In groups, and in ones and twos, aged between and 6 and 16, they sat and gave their thoughts and ideas on the subject.

Their answers contained practical needs, reflecting their own personal experiences, in most cases, of caring for younger siblings:

"With the little ones you have to keep them away from fire and sharp things, and show them good play so they don't hurt themselves..... You need to teach them to speak nicely and to study - and to show respect to their elders, and love to their younger brothers and sisters."

"You need to teach them good things - like not playing in dirty water, not saying bad things, only passing faeces in the latrine - and taking water with them to the latrine....

"They need to keep clean, and you have to wash them if they can't do it themselves because they are too small."

"Children need to play.... They need clean clothes and clean food and green vegetables - and often if they are little, they need to be taught how to behave and speak.

They were also concerned about learning needs and methods:

"You need to play with them, tell them the names of toys and colors: and ***show*** *them as well as* ***tell*** *them how to study....."*

"Children need to go to school - but there is no point sending them if you don't give them a pen and books..... If they don't want to go to school, you have to encourage them."

"If our parents scold us, then they should give us knowledge too. Being scolded makes us not want to go to school. Makes us forget....."

Many of their answers reflected their emotional needs too:

"You must praise children when they are good and not shout if they're bad, just remind them. If you hit them they'll never come close to you. They'll stay away - ***and*** *they won't obey."*

"If children are little they need to be taught how to behave and speak. But they ***don't*** *need hitting, they need explanation - its only occasionally you need to scold like if they kill a chicken. But then they themselves feel upset and feel like crying. If you scold them, children can't learn, they aren't clever. If fathers scold, children are afraid and can't obey - then they need loving and praising. If they don't understand they need loving...."*

Even at this age they were clear too that they needed respect, and some of the things they **don't** need:

"Others shouldn't say 't' to us - its not good...." ('t' is the lowest form of address of "you" in Nepali. Its used mainly for animals, or in anger, or for people considered very much lower than the speaker.)

When talking about what they do when they are upset about something, many children said they would tell their mothers: and some said they would tell their best friend. All, with only one exception, felt fathers were not the people to tell if upset; and several said their fathers might scold them, or even hit them, and they'd be scared to tell them. Significantly, however, several children in the six to sixteen year old age range felt that when upset it was best not to tell ***anyone*** - just to keep it to themselves, because they couldn't trust whoever they told not to tell others - either their parents or other friends.

Mothers are still seen as children's primary source of emotional support.

The children's comments and reflections on child develop-ment reflect that mothers are still seen as the primary source of emotional support, and that fathers were considered more distant. Although, *parents* felt that there *were* changes in fathers' relationships to their children, still from the children's point of view, their answers reflected a lack of perceived emotional intimacy with their fathers in most cases.

Perhaps even more important than children's present perception and understanding of what is needed for good child development, is any change in this understanding over the life span of the project - which of course cannot be answered here. In particular the level of involvement of men in their children's emotional life and needs, would be an important indicator, as would the level of trust experienced by children, that would allow them to share their anxieties with others.

CHILDREN IN CHANGE.....

The entry point of this whole program has been the children: and the first activity for children undertaken has usually been the Home Based Child Care Centre. For many adults in the community, especially the mothers, it is a relief to have safe, regular child care by other adults - frequently in the past these young children were "minded" only by slightly older siblings. For the mother it was a dilemma, to which the Home Based Child Care Centres have provided a solution.

"We used to leave the little children in the house alone.... I always worried when I had to leave them - but I couldn't carry them ***and*** *the water; I couldn't keep them out in the sun all day when I went to do field work.... Now we can leave them in the Home Based Child Care Centre with other mothers, and there's safety for them. They also have friends....."*

Grandmothers, sometimes the child carers previously, have often now become respected helpers and advisors to the mothers in the Home Based Child Care Centre.

All parents speak positively about the changes they have observed in their children through participation in this program's activities.

Certain changes were spoken of by almost everyone - especially changes in the hygiene, language skills, and social skills of the children. Changes in cleanliness are usually mentioned first:-

*"I have seen a **big** change in my children's cleanliness. They used to spend their time playing and quarrelling, and they always looked dirty as they did not wash their face and hands and teeth. Now they wash their hands and faces daily, and they cut their nails too as they say their "Miss" will notice. They think if they go to school, or to the Child to Child Class, dirty, others will exclude them from their groups. They tell their mother and I that we **must** have a toilet..."*

"These days the children are cleaner - they are toilet trained earlier - they go to the toilet themselves. They wash their hands before food - if I tell my little son to eat these days he washes his hands first! After he goes to the toilet, he washes his hands and feet: he never did that before he went to the Home Based Child Care Centre".

Many spoke of the advantage to the non-Nepali speaking children of learning Nepali in the Child Care Centre: how much easier it was for the children to then go to school later. Teachers also spoke of the advantage to these Gurung and Tamang children to have Nepali language before entering school, otherwise they started with this disadvantage and took years to catch up academically - if they ever did. One teacher reflected:

"The children come from different language groups - and initially when they came to school they talked only their own languages - Gurung, Tamang, or Nepali: we teachers only speak Nepali, and could not understand them. It takes a long time before they all speak Nepali even though we encourage them ..... The children from the CCCs speak more Nepali already which helps a lot".

Parents also comment on the changes in the childrens' self-confidence and socialisation - both their behaviour together with other children, and their behaviour with adults:

"In the beginning the children at the Home Based Child Care Centre quarrelled a lot and cried a lot. They were frightened of the toys too. It took about two months, but then they learned to play with other children - they began to share their toys and play well in a group...my own son is only three years old and he used to quarrel a lot with his brother and sister but now he has changed."

"My grandson has opportunity in Home Based Child Care Centre to play with his own age group. He learned to stay with other mothers as well as his own, and became more adaptable. This has helped him to prepare to go to school. He has had opportunities to play with toys which we can not provide - I think toys are so important for his development."

"The children are much more confident to give answers to questions now in Child Care Centre - and outside: but they also ask many more questions....."

One teacher spoke of the differences he noted between children coming into Class One who had attended the Child Care Centre and those who had not:

"I notice that the children coming from the Child Care Centre are more polite and clean, they speak more Nepali, and they mix better with other children in a group for play: the children who have not had the opportunity for Child Care Centre do notix so well, their behaviour is rough and their language (Nepali) is less."

The children's behaviour towards adults had also been noticed to change:

" When the children meet an adult they know now, they greet them so politely saying "Namaste" ... In the past they were frightened with any one they did not know, any outsider, but now they are able to greet them also."

This change in social interaction with adults included changes with their own fathers and mothers also; with the children affecting their parents by information given:

"My two children, as soon as they return home from Child to Child Class want to explain to us about the class, or the posters and pamphlets. We do not have to ask them - they simply start talking! They keep the posters on the wall... they really like to talk to us about these things now. They tell their mother also about cleanliness in the house".

Parents frequently commented about the children's increased curiosity and the effects on them - the children causing changes for them also. One father laughed.....

"These days my child is always asking questions - so I'm always tired!"

Another father commented about his childrens' interests:

"They used to just play around at home, but now they want to learn something new - they want to talk with us, their parents, about what they learnt in class, or to knit or make something new....."

Some parents commented on specific skills the children have learned - that they knew their colors, that they could manage to do fine movements with their hands, that they began to read at Child Care Centre etc. One teacher commented":

"It used to take me two years to teach Class One children the alphabet.... now when they come from Child Care Centre, it takes me around two months".

Parents felt too that the childrens' nutrition was better. They reported the children as fatter since thier mothers had learned about good food, and the children received a daily meal of "Super Flour Porridge" during Home Based Child Care. They also said that whereas the children wouldn't eat green vegetables before, now they come and ask for them.

These skills gained from the stimulation of child care, - language, socialisation, personal hygiene, - are obviously of benefit to the children. But do ***all*** children benefit? How inclusive is the project ? It seems that the vast majority of children ***do*** participate in the programs' activities for them, in areas where they are available. But there ***are*** some exceptions, especially in the following groups.

A few families have moved into Bharate Village to run tea shops over the last few years. It is uncertain how long they will stay and they are not considered fully part of the community by others. Generally neither these children nor their mothers have participated in child care activities, although recently one child from this group of families came to the project office staff to ask if he could join the Child to Child Class, as all the other children his age were going. His mother now also wants to send her younger child to Child Care Centre. However this family is an exception, and although in these families the children show some obvious behaviour problems and are not well socialised with the other village children, so far it has not been possible for the program to include them.

Some children with severe disability are also excluded. For instance, one child with cerebral palsy, who cannot speak or walk or play, and has to be carried everywhere, does not attend the Home Based Child Care Centre. Another child

with cleft lip and palate does not come to Child to Child Classes. Recently a young child with epilepsy has stopped going to Home Based Child Care Centre because the other mothers are afraid of his fits and how to manage them. However, the project has been seeking out disabled children, and has sent 2 children to Kathmandu for treatment. One of these girls, now walking on crutches, has been able to start school after attending Cheli Beti Class. In the Child to Child Classes questions of disability, and attitudes to other disabled children, are also discussed.

Some of the poorest and lowest caste children also do not attend the Child Care because in their area the community has not yet been able to organize itself enough to do this, and often parents feel that the daily labour for existence does not leave enough time to attend to the program's activities. One mother whose daughter does not go to Child Care Centre explained that her father wasn't willing to send her because she was needed to watch the animals and do field work.

Some other children, girls, are limited in their attendance by their in-laws' wishes after their child marriages, and this again particularly applies to the poorer castes where marriage tends to be earlier.

These examples of non-inclusiveness, although not many in number, are obviously a cause for concern for the project, and pose a difficult challenge.

It is clear that improved children development is drawing out changes in their parents.

The changes brought about in these children attending child care, or the childrens' classes seem clear: better hygiene; increased language

skills in Nepali; development of motor skills; better nutrition; and the development of the childrens' ability for social interaction - both with their own parents or other adults, and with other children. It is not possible to separate out the effect of the input directly to the children, from the indirect effects through the parents' education classes and other project activities: however, it is clear that the changes in the children are, in turn, affecting and drawing out change in their parents.

WOMEN IN CHANGE.....

"The first time I went to training for mothers about home based child care centers I was so scared I was shaking! Everything was new for me. I couldn't speak or understand Nepali language, only Gurung - but now I had to speak Nepali. How would I manage?"

This woman is not unusual. Many Gurung and Tamang women in Lumjung District do not speak Nepali - Nepal's lingua franca.

"Older sister (the staff member) gave me some small sticks to count how many Nepali words I spoke. I was so nervous..... each one word I spoke I gave one stick to her. For seven days she taught us Nepali. Now I too can speak Nepali and I speak Nepali with my children at home also to teach them. Even my little son can ask for food in Nepali now....."

To speak Nepali for these women represents being able to communicate with a wider world than their own little community; and their changed level of confidence is reflected in many ways. The HBCCC and other activities have also contributed to this as their effect has often been

to deepen and strengthen the relationships between women. For many women there has been a growing sense of solidarity and support:

"In our home based Child Care Centers we are six mothers in the group. We have very good relationships amongst us. Everyone can make suggestions, from the most junior to the most senior. We are really good friends now....."

One area that has contributed to this cohesion and confidence is that of fund-raising for the CCC. Since the long term sustainability of the Child Care Centers depends on the local community being able to pay the monthly salary to the Child Care Centers' teachers, in each Child Care Centre area a committee and fund has been set up. Money is collected, mainly from the traditional Bhailo-Deusi systems. In Bhailo-Deusi, at the big festivals, or at marriages, or for visitors to the house, a group of women or men sing and dance at others' houses for small payment. Usually the women have earned and collected much more than the men towards these funds, but both have contributed. Again this has been an enjoyable social activity for women together, and they tell with pride their own fund raising efforts, and its purpose of providing child care for their children.

Another area is the confidence gained from literacy. The Functional Adult Literacy Classes are attended with great commitment by the women in the project area, although they have to come late in the evening for their classes, six days a week for six months, having worked all day in the house and in the fields. Despite this, many are reluctant to finish after the two hour class. Practical problems include the difficulty of coming by night on paths where jackals

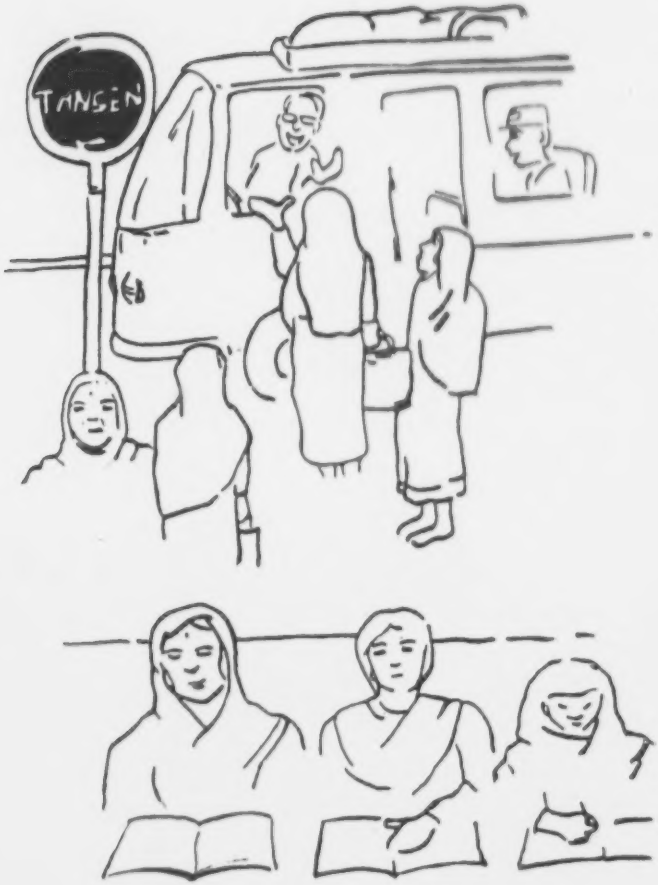
and leopards may be found, and the issues of child care which mean that many fathers and grandparents are also committed to being with the children for these periods. Women speak of the confidence that they can no longer be cheated if they can read, and write their own name.

In the same way that Nepali language skills have given women access to a world wider than their own community, so field trips have made this access a reality. Many Lamjung women have not travelled beyond their immediate village area. For the past 4 years the project has taken groups of women - and men - for short trips once a year to see development work in other areas in Nepal. In particular women have visited Women's Agencies and Production Credit for Rural Women's schemes, focusing on literacy and income generation work. Women are unanimous in their appreciation of these tours. Men also spoke of the change in womens' thinking and attitudes as a result of being able to see others' programs. These tours have had effects on other program areas too, as a staff member recounts:

"Up till then the women had not decided for Functional Adult Literacy Classes, but on our observation trip they could not read the sign posts on the road, and when they asked the bus driver, he made fun of them and was rude to them about it. So they decided they needed to read!"

Traditionally, women in this area have not participated actively in village leadership and meetings. At the start of the project, even in some of the project committees the men took the lead. One male village leader reflects:

"We didn't do it intentionally, but when we started the Child Care Centre Committee 3 years ago we didn't even



think about including women in the committee. Most of our village committees have only male members. Also women didn't use to speak in the meetings before this program came - except for a few senior, older women: women didn't know how to speak in a meeting then - now they do. So now we

should include women in our committees ..... Personally I think it would be very good to do that. They would also have suggestions."

In most villages however, a transition has now occurred and women *do* participate. Often this change has been initiated by the women themselves - as one women recounts:

"We used to have a lot of trouble with men drinking too much and joking about the girls. Now its under control these days. One day we had a village meeting. There were women there too but no one said anything from the womens' side. So

I said to the men that both fathers and mothers need to understand each other. Then another older woman said that women are also learning many things these days and should also have an opportunity to speak. The community leader then said that if women disagree with what men say in a meeting they should say so - and men should say if they disagree. So many people agreed that women should also participate in village meetings."

Mothers' groups have given a forum for women to learn about hygiene, nutrition, and health care; as well as about child development, family relationships and environmental issues. They also provide a safe forum for women to explore together the attitudes of society towards them.

In these groups stories are frequently recounted of women who **have** effected change in their lives - as this woman, who was met on an observation tour:

"In Syanja there was a high caste woman who started a vegetable field. Every one teased her and despised her that she was doing this work herself. But in the second year she made 60,000/- Rs.! Now she feels very proud that she achieved this, and others are also considering it..... We also hardly ever saw any vegetable garden in the past, but now we are aware that we need them too....."

Women's health is an issue that frequently comes up in the mothers' groups; and there is evidence of change in attitudes:

"I used to smoke such a lot, - I didn't stop all day. When I was pregnant with my daughter, I smoked like that. I think that is why she is so thin, and can never get fatter. Then in a mothers' class I heard that smoking is bad for your health - so I started to cut down - to a few cigarettes each day, then only in the cold weather. Now I have stopped altogether and I have not smoked at all for six or seven months."

Attitudes to the nutrition of mothers during pregnancy have also changed:

"We always used to say that if women eat good food or a lot of food in pregnancy, their baby will get big, and the birth will be very difficult to give birth to a big baby. Now these days, after we learned in our mothers' classes, we say that mothers ***must*** *eat good food during pregnancy....."*

This new knowledge and care for themselves physically, has gone alongside the women considering their own life experiences as women, and their own attitudes towards their daughters. One area of much concern is that of marriage. Many of the women in Lamjung were married very young, and, even now 10-14 years old is a common age for marriage, especially in the poorer groups. One woman, now with grown up daughters herself, remembers:

"I was married at 7 years old - and was sent to my new home. I had to learn so many new ways, new people - how can one learn so much at that age? It was a terrible thing for me. I wept so many tears..... Many times I have asked my mother "Why did you do such a thing? You sent your sons to school and didn't get them married till 14 or 15!!" She just reminds me that people say that if you get a girl married before her first menstrual period, that will bring merit and blessing to her parents. People also say if a woman doesn't have a son and gets her daughter married before her periods come, she will be able to get a son. I only married my daughters at 16 and 18 years."

Other women also expressed changed attitudes:

"My daughter must study first: she can marry later - around 22 or 23 years....."

"If I had a daughter, - but I only have sons! - I would say she must study, and only marry when she wants to..... if she doesn't want to, I'd do what she wants, she can stay at home....."

In 1991 a problem occurred in the project that triggered off a highly significant event: the formation of a "Womens' Self Help Centre". It happened this way:

"A man kept coming, drunk, to the Bharate F.A.L.C. class. He said the women were only there for entertainment, for romantic interest as there were 3 men in the class..... He kept coming, and even after a meeting with the project-in-charge and the participants, a solution couldn't be found..... Some participants said he must apologize, but some other local men supported him. So the women came together for a meeting to discuss it and find a solution."

The women were also concerned about other problems in their community too - alcoholism, arguments between husbands and wives, wife beating, gambling.

A founder member describes the first meeting of the women:

"We were about 40 women in the beginning. We all put our names, all raised our hands to say that we as women could also work, that we would form a Womens' Self Help Centre, - though we didn't know what that meant really. Now 400-500 women come to our meetings...."

These women went on to form an executive committee of 9 members; a constitution; a song; and a logo. They registered themselves as a local N.G.O.; and after some initial training to Executive Committee Members by project staff, they made contact with District Agriculture, Forestry and Health Offices, from whom they got very positive responses, and some offers of training.

Another role of the Womens' Self Help Centre has been to respond to women - or men - coming for help. There have been cases of women beaten by their husbands, or financially neglected or abandoned by them, - in favour of

another wife. There the Self Help Centre has formed a sub-committee for each case, and has sought help from the village leaders, and other men in the community if they couldn't find a solution themselves. On occasions they have threatened the offending husband with a court case. Recently an elderly ***man*** also sought their help after being neglected by his son and daughter-in-law with whom he lives. Results in these cases are sometimes very good and sometimes more mixed:

"One tailor's first wife came to us to complain against her husband. She has 4 children, her husband has another wife in the same house, and doesn't care for her and her children at all. He has had 2 more wives previously also. When we went to talk to him, the tailor told us that he doesn't have anything to share with her, that what he earns every day supports his family, and that his wife is just not happy with what he can provide - he couldn't do anything more. But his wife is unhappy with why he still brought other wives when she was there, and says that he has a duty to do something for her children. We tried to persuade him to give her more support, but unfortunately he ran away from the village. So this matter is still not settled. If he doesn't come back, there is no alternative but that she will have to earn for herself."

This Self Help Centre has also challenged the gambling and drinking habits in the villages, with considerable effect in several areas.

What do the men feel about this new experience of a Womens' Organization amongst them?

"It is good that if anyone has a big problem or a quarrel that women should also be involved in solving such social problems

and in developing our society. Because of the Centre our village introduced another crop this year - wheat - we used to only have rice and maize. So I think its a good thing....."

Another man questioned whether the womens' actions are causing the changes, or whether men are just more aware now:

"Many men have realized themselves that drinking and gambling harm them - it causes resentment at home in their families, and they lose money. We have heard this on the radio too..... The main benefits and effects of the Womens' Centre has been that womens' morale is much higher - they are confident that they can do something for themselves, they can fight against injustice, - even go to the Minister themselves! Its a very good thing."

Women recounted that there had been a change from earlier skeptical reactions of men - "Why go? What can women do? " - to much more interest, questions, and discussion, about their meetings of the Self Help Centre.

This very rapid growth of the Self Help Centre, and the large gatherings of women it has brought about, is one more aspect of the changes in women in the area - in their confidence, and in their attitudes. Women express these profound changes in themselves:

"We used to say we must obey our husbands, they know what's right, we must obey them. Especially we learnt this from our mothers, our fathers, our mothers-in-law..... We said "We are just girls, this is our life." But our daughters' attitudes are different. Now they say "No, we're also able to learn, we also can be educated, we can also do development work....."

"We used to say, when men said that only boys should go to school, that the men have had some education, so they ***know*** *..... we believed them! I believed my husband, even though I wanted my daughter to go to school. Now, we say, we* ***women*** *have also got some education, we* ***women*** *also know....."*

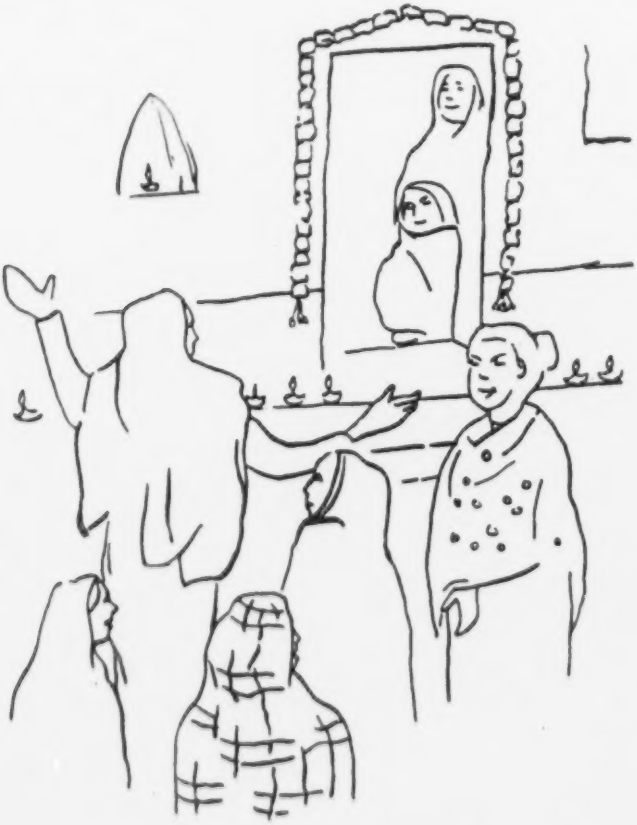
They also express their aspirations and hopes for the future:

"I want these kinds of changes to continue - that we women should be equal in knowing about money, work, decisions for our children, - that our husbands will talk to us about so many things they never used to. These things bring big changes in our families....."

What has the project done that has facilitated these remarkable changes amongst women? Firstly, through the HBCCCs, the FALC classes and the mothers' classes, it has provided women with a legitimate forum to come together, learn together, discuss together, and strengthen their ties and support to each other. Secondly, though the child focus it has given them a new experience of growth and development in their children, and a new confidence in their own parenting abilities. It seems that the child focus has also allowed the men to welcome these changes in the mothers of their children, as acceptable and desirable - and as contributing to their childrens' better future. The confidence gained by women in their new language and literacy skills also cannot be underestimated.

However, the womens' activities have gone beyond those planned by the project. The project's objectives included: "To educate community members in group work so that they may use it for their own welfare" - an objective that the women's Self Help Centre meets. The Project Coordi-

nator herself had previous experience in Women's Self Help groups, and gave strong support to the Centre's birth. But the Self Help Centre itself was not a planned project activity. Its future course is also, of course, not a project responsibility; and already, because of the large size of the gatherings and the distance women come to attend them, the women of some villages are wanting to have their own meetings and structure.



FATHERS IN CHANGE.....

What happens to fathers when a child based program occurs? How do they feel about the emphasis given to their children and wives and daughters ? How are they involved and affected ?

In many areas the initial meetings held between the project team and the local communities in Lamjung were held entirely with men. Many of the Child Care Centre committee members are male, and men in many cases deal with the accounts and finances. Men participate in one part of the mothers training for Home Based Child Care Centres, and help with making toys and buildings for child care.

Have the men felt fully involved in the project ? Mainly the men said yes, but in one village the response was mixed:

"We saw the women studying in the adult literacy classes. Then we said it should not be only for the women - because the women of the house started reading and writing but we men could not. Finally we requested for classes for men too- but in the beginning we did not know that was possible, we thought

maybe this whole program is only for mothers. So we said its no good... if only the women are involved, the program cannot go further,... it will be incomplete.... its not possible... We men felt, why is this program talking only to women, involving only women? What do they want to teach them ? We felt we men are lagging behind... Now there is a program for fathers' classes also, and we do not feel the same. Now we feel its a collective work, its for all of us, we have to do it together, step forward together..."

Initially, in the first field area, there was quite a long time gap between the initiation of the project's activities and the starting of fathers' groups - about one year. The man speaking here was from that area. Partly this was because the women in that area were *so* far behind the men - they didn't even speak outside of their home - that project staff felt they needed some time first for themselves. Also the project staff needed to develop the content of classes for fathers, the materials etc.: as there was no similar program being carried on in Nepal. However in the newer project areas fathers' groups have started at the same time as mothers' groups. In the first meeting of a group the men set their own ground rules, regarding timing, place, whether smoking is allowed in the meetings, etc. Meetings are arranged over the same bredth of topics as the mothers' meetings - health, hygiene and sanitation, child development, nutrition, environmental issues, etc. In Nepali culture it is not unusual for men to sit together and discuss; but the unusualness of these meetings is both in the bredth of backgrounds and castes that the meetings bring together, and in the topics that are discussed. To have a village meeting of men discussing the subject of their under-five-year-old childrens' development needs *is* a remarkable occurrence: as is the discussion about women's status in Nepal, and the situation for women in their own villages, homes, and families.

Responses to the project activities for children and women are generally very positive, and the men recount the changes with pride:

"I see big changes: the little children are talking more - even in Nepali! They never said 'Namaste' before, but now they greet people on the path so nicely - even unknown people. They used to speak only Gurung or their own community language, but now they can speak Nepali .....

When they started eating " super flour porridge" they got diarrhoea for a few days, but then they were O.K. I think all the children are fatter now....."

"I think there have been many advantages for the fathers. We have benefitted indirectly from our wives because our wives have learnt many things from the programs - hygiene, house maintaining, vegetable gardening - so now they are more careful in looking after the children and house.... Fathers have had the opportunity to learn new things from their children too."

Many men felt that they had benefitted directly from the Fathers' Classes in terms of their own relationship to their children:

"Now most fathers have realised that children need love and care from ***them****. They have always loved their children but they weren't attached to them. We did not know* ***we*** *should take care of children,* ***we*** *should take an interest in their activities. So the fathers' thinking has changed. Now fathers also feel ashamed if they do not send their children to school!"*

Some women felt that the distance between fathers and their younger children had not changed:

"The fathers have never been close to their young children - the children are scared of them. There is no change there - but with the older children, say 10 years or more, there is a difference: now fathers think more about their older children....."

However, most of them felt that there ***were*** changes in the fathers in relation to their younger children also:

"The children talk to their fathers now, after HBCCC or after school, and tell them what they have been doing.... They are also looking after the children more - like for the times when their wives attend Adult Literacy Class: They seem more concerned about them...."

Many of the men in this area spend many years in the army, away from home -usually in India, - so missing the formative years in their children's lives. Several spoke of how their children did not know them and did not obey them when they were home on leave. One woman reflected on the effects of the program on men in her village:

"I feel the children are less fearful of their fathers now: they used to scold them so much, and use bad words also. Now that has completely stopped."

"Yes, the men benefit because many of them go to India and they are more satisfied if they feel their children are being well cared for at home. In our society men always thought that woman should do all the household works and all the caring for the children. This program has helped them to understand that mothers ***and*** *fathers have equal responsibility to care for their children... There is not the same discrepancy between sons and daughters in Gurung families as there is in Brahmin and Chhetri families - Gurung fathers can talk with both. These days children come and talk about school and children's program activities with their parents: and fathers too have fathers' classes so its a two-way feed back... I think fathers talk more with their children and are more attached to their children these days because of this."*

What about the men's attitudes to women ? One man spoke about his experiences on an observation tour:

"One program we saw was a forest nursery program. It was also very nice. But ***mothers*** *take care of those nurseries! Then we realised that mothers can also help in development work .... but in the past we have not allowed them to be fullyinvolved. Wherever we went we saw* ***mothers*** *were leading: they talked with us... Mothers have done a very good job there. Sometimes I think if mothers can do so much, then mothers* ***and*** *fathers together could definitely do much more here than at present ...."*

Do the women feel that the men's attitudes to them have changed at all?

"Previously, until about two or three years ago, women weren't allowed to go out of the house except for field work - my husband didn't allow me to go out either. Now he sends me to the Adult Literacy Class and he wants to know what I learnt when I come home".

"I especially notice that now the fathers want to know if their wives have enough food at meal times....."

"My husband used to tell me, if I was going to the mothers' meeting, then tomorrow I would have to do two days work. He doesn't say that any more..... And we women try and get work done the day before, - if we can't, we help each other the day after."

Perhaps the most significant changes women comment on in their husband is in their communication with them - about money, about decisions, about schooling:

"In the past men always said they earn the money, and they spent it on themselves. Wives didn't know about income or expenses. Now they realise that its for everyone..... Now my husband realises I also need money, and so do my children....."

"I didn't know about the money before. Now I know, and my husband talks to me about it. He even talked to me about taking a loan and took my advice on it!"

"The most important thing is that the men always said: "Only send our sons to school". Now they say "We must send our daughters to school too, there mustn't be discrimination...."

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Many of these villagers feel that men's alcohol drinking and gambling have been major problems in their families and in village life. Women express this more strongly than men - speaking of the economic loss, the arguments and family strife and violence; but men also are concerned. Many felt that there had been changes. As one male leader said:

"These days we do not allow people to gamble and play cards except at Tihar festival. They are not allowed to play at other times. Its our custom to drink alcohol in some festivals so we drink on those occasions only. There is not so much change in the smoking area but ***some*** *people have stopped."*

On occasions the child has clearly been the agent of change:

"My husband used to drink a lot, and then he'd be drunk and crazy. Now he drinks less: because my daughter learned at Child to Child Class that much drink is not good, and if someone is drinking too much it should be controlled gradually. For instance, if he drank four glasses before, now he should drink two.....so my husband did that. Men did not have that self discipline before."

Several men spoke of their childrens' future as the motivation for change. One man summed up :

"If a child's father or other senior family members play cards, and drink alcohol, then the child will learn the same. Consciously or unconsciously they say what we say, they do what we do.... Now that many men have left these habits the children are much benefitted...."

Men in the project area are clear that they have benefitted from the projects' activities. Benefits have been indirect -

through their children and wives, as well as direct. They or their wives report changes in their relationships with their children in certain ways - especially in the quantity of time spent together, and in the direct communication; as well as some changes in the quality of communication or bond. Women experience change in their husband's communication with them also: and heavy drinking and gambling has been reduced in many of the villages.

The home-based child development programme made a significant shift in emphasis to parents and their respective roles in raising their children rather than only on mothers.

Thus the project itself has made a significant shift over time in its emphasis being more on **parents** rather than only on mothers. Certainly, although mens' village meetings are culturally acceptable and a common occurence in Nepal, this is the first time that men have been targeted in their role as **fathers**, for activities directly relating to their parenting skills and their childrens' development.

How has the project moved in this direction? Firstly the project-in-charge had previously worked in a womens' development program where monthly meetings were held with the men (although not about parenting) and she herself already believed that to change womens' experience a program must also work with men. Her training of field staff therefore included discussion and role plays about

working with the fathers in the community, and in selection of staff this aspect was also considered. Secondly, there were, in the early experiences of the project, local men confident enough to question the level of activities and involvement for ***them***, and to ask for more. Although originally the content of the mens' classes were determined by the project, more recently the men themselves have also proposed topics. It seems that their growth in this has also helped by seeing programs in other places, where womens' roles were already expanding and changing.

This very significant growth in the mens' involvement and on the focus on them in their roles as parents and fathers and husbands, rather than as community leaders, village elders etc. is enthusiastically spoken of by the men and women alike, and is one of the more unique features of the program.

LOWER CASTE GROUPS IN CHANGE...

Lamjung is a diverse community. Gurung and Tamang hill-tribe people with their different languages co-exist with high caste Brahmin and Chhetri, and low caste Bishwakarma. There are several sub-groups of lower caste people - Kami (metal workers), Damai (tailors), Sarki (leather workers), and Bhujel (who although low caste are not untouchable as the others are.) In many villages homes are arranged according to ethnic group or caste, and commonly the lower castes' homes are higher up the hillside where land is poorer and water supply more difficult. The lower caste people may have some land, but usually insufficient for their needs, so they work for richer families - cutting wood, or working on the land, - and are paid in rice or millet at harvest time. The Bishwakarma community are skilled at building and wood-work for houses, and are commonly employed by the Gurungs to build for them. They also make mats and other items from bamboo for sale - and even in meetings will bring their sticks of bamboo with them, to keep working. In some Bishwakarma areas the community is close knit and money is saved communally to buy land, - in one person's name this year and in another person's name the next. In other low caste communities, however, the community coordination is poor.

What has the CBCDP meant to these people?

The CBCDP was planned from it's outset to include the ***whole*** community, and not to focus on one particular group. It was therefore decided to hold meetings in each

village that included all groups in the community, - to treat the village as one unit.

In reality it has been difficult for high and low caste people to equally participate. In village meetings the high caste people are often much more vocal, and are quicker to understand the issues for their community; whereas for the lower caste individuals they need more time and discussion. They are also often afraid to speak in the meetings, or to express their opinions in front of their employers in the higher caste group, for fear of displeasing them. On occasions they have used alcohol to gain courage to speak: on other occasions they have simply not participated in decisions made For instance, in one area where, in the community planning meeting it was decided that everyone should build a latrine, later it was discovered that the low caste Kamis had not done this. They said:

*"It wasn't **our** decision to make latrines - it was decided by the higher caste people - so why should we make them?"*

This has had effects on planning, as it is clear that the needs and realities of the lower caste groups are often not known by their higher caste neighbors. For instance, in one village, the higher caste members said in the planning meetings that there was no need for girls' education classes in their area since all their daughters already went to school. However, in the lower caste families living on the edge of that village ***none*** of the girls attended school - but in the meeting none of the lower caste members spoke. It was only after a local school teacher and his wife spoke up that the decision was reversed. The girls' class teacher later said:

*"Our lower caste girls are **very** backward. Many people said that they didn't need these classes because their daughters go to*

*school. But you don't see **any** girl in the school from the lower caste community..... Now as a result of the literacy classes these girls have changed. Their clothes are clean, they can speak Nepali, some have stopped smoking. Their parents or in-laws are very happy: they say that they work harder at home and argue less....."*

The CBCDP was also planned from the outset to have children as its entry point, and for activities in an area to be child- focused:- to start after the planning stage, with Home Based Child Care Centres. This focus was the same for high and low caste groups. Certainly it has usually been easier for children of different caste groups to mix freely in activities, than for the adults to do so.

The Home Based Child Care Centres, Child Care Centres, and Child to Child Education Classes are of mixed castes in several areas. While issues of difference (eg. the problems of different castes to eat together in terms of ritual cleanliness) have come up, they have been resolved. In the girls' non-formal education classes also, different groups of girls have mixed together successfully.

However, in one low caste village where a Home Based Child Care Centre ***was*** started, it closed down following conflict between two of the mothers as to whether the food for the children was being fairly distributed. Project staff were unable to facilitate the women to find a resolution, despite repeated attempts.

As a result of the stopping of the Home Based Child Care Centre in this area, these mothers also stopped attending the mothers' classes, and the fathers also do not attend the fathers' groups. Several mothers said "If every body went

then I would go", but no-one seems able to make this decision for themselves unless it is a group decision, even while they ***do*** recognize the advantages for their children and for themselves. The only project activity that now impinges on this community is the Child Care Centre in the area, but the mothers involved in the Home Based Child Care Centre conflict are not sending their children to CCC either. The village has also been benefitted by a piped water supply. Some of the benefits of the Child Care, even though recognized, have also not been continued. For instance, one mother expressed the following:

"Yes, my daughter's behavior improved a lot - she cleaned her own teeth and washed herself every day. Even though she doesn't go these days, I feel her behavior is still better than my neighbors' children who didn't go - they are not clean and they don't speak well. These days I take my younger child to the field with me, but I don't feed her Super Flour Porridge any more - its not worth making it just for one child."

"My child went to the Home Based Child Care Centre and I'd really like my younger daughter to go too. Her older sister learnt to go to the toilet herself, she learnt to greet people nicely, and when she came home in the evening, she was contented and happy. But I think we won't be able to start the Home Based Child Care Centre again until all the mothers can agree....."

It seems as though, since the HBCCC was the first activity in that community, that the failure of this caused involvement in other activities also to stop. Two factors were particularly spoken of as having an effect on this. Firstly, that the sheer load of work necessary for daily survival left little time for anything else: and secondly that for participation to be possible it needed a corporate decision. One Kami mother said:

"I don't go to any of the activities now and my husband also doesn't go. He doesn't have time to go because he is a farmer and he also has to do carpentry work, and I also don't have time to go, I have too much work at home. My friends here also don't go, neither do their husbands. If every body went, then I would go, but the problems between mothers must first be esolved. We weren't united, we didn't all think the same way, and so it was not possible for us to go."

And another low caste man said:

I also don't have time to go to the fathers' class. Our land is not enough and I have to work on others land also: sometimes I work for the whole month, sometimes just for a few days. I can see that there seems to be some change in our neighbors' children who go to the HBCCC and CCC - they seem to have improved in their behavior, they can read a little and count numbers. When my wife was involved in the Mothers' Home Based Child Care, she also benefitted as she only had to stay one day in six to look after her small children; but these days she does not have time to go."

Certainly there was less support in low caste groups from the men for their wives to attend FALC, and less willingness to undertake child care to allow them to go. Drop out rates of FALC classes reflect this: in one Kami village 6 out of 18 women dropped out - a much higher rate than in other areas.

Community leaders, of higher caste themselves, recognized clearly the differences in participation from the different caste groups: and reflected on it:

"Of course, it depends on peoples' approach and thinking and attitudes - but every body wants to see development. Every

body wants to have good food, clean clothes, good living..... I don't think the main reason for differences in the program is caste - I think its poverty. These people are dependent on their ***daily*** *income for survival. So they do not have time to be involved in our program daily because they have to earn for their children, for their survival,..... if they don't work, they cannot get food - so how can they participate? This program is not run for a particular caste or group - but to develop the area as a whole. I myself realize that it will not happen unless from different castes people participate in the development work together....."*

Project Staff feel that these other issues of time and work for the lower caste groups are very real, but that there are also attitude problems-on both sides. They feel that the higher caste men on occasions virtually ***order*** the lower caste men to attend the meetings, as they know that Redd Barna gives preference to the lower caste groups. They have seen higher caste women often speak roughly to lower caste women in meetings, rather than encourage them to speak. But they also feel that the attitude in the lower caste groups is often more passive, - a feeling that they are more backward, and poorer, and should, therefore, be given more help and more benefits from the project. One staff member mentioned that the men sometimes seem more passive than the women; that sometimes the women are more keen to unite in doing an activity, but that the men feel that this program is not so suitable for them, and they are less willing to be involved.

Certain areas of the project's work addressed these issues of caste very personally, as the following examples show. Firstly, on two occasions, members of the community have been sent away for training. Last year one Brahmin and

two low caste men were sent for a carpentry course in Kathmandu. This necessitated that they all attended the class together, that they cooked together, and that they ate together. For a Brahmin person, to whom food is defiled and made ritually unclean by contact with lower caste people, this was a very new experience. The Brahmin man recounted how difficult he found it at first but how happy he was later. Secondly, in the observation tours, members of different castes of the community travel together, visit projects together, and all eat together in the same hotel. These issues are discussed before they go on their observation trip so that they are prepared for their own feelings and reactions. Thirdly, in the Adult Literacy Classes issues of bribery, corruption, and oppression are discussed and lower caste groups consider what these things mean for their own communities. And, of course, the mixing of children of different castes in child care, and childrens' classes, also brings parents into close and daily contact with those of different caste groups than their own.

This issue of the most needy in the community, not accessing the opportunities of this project as much as the higher caste groups, - for whatever reason, - is obviously a critical one. It is not possible to determine from this project all the factors that contribute to this. **However, certain factors are clear - economic factors** necessitating long hours of daily labor to achieve even subsistence survival: **social factors** with the difficulty in participating equally in group activities with one's employers: **attitude factors**, both in the negative attitudes of the higher caste groups to those in lower castes, and in the attitudes of the lower caste members themselves that hold little hope for change in their community: attitude factors also that do not allow for individuals within these groups to decide to

participate in development activities without the whole groups' participation: and **the political factor** that community leadership in these villages lies in the hands of the higher caste groups.

There may be factors within the project also. Project field workers are not of these lower caste groups themselves, and their training is to work in community development - through group motivation, and group participation. Indeed the work of this project is based very much on group interaction at different levels, and this is seen as the vehicle for community development: with every activity being proceeded and accompanied by group interaction. Yet project staff feel there is a need go more slowly, spend more time, discuss more fully with these lower caste groups. So far only one FALC facilitator is of a low caste group.

How has the Project responded to these issues for the lower caste groups?

Firstly, although the project remains committed to working with the whole community in the area, they have tried holding separate meetings for low caste groups - both to allow them more time to discuss, and to allow them to freely express their views, without the inhibition of having their employers present. Although these meetings are not regular, they have been especially encouraged before the wider community planning meetings, or around particular issues. For instance, in the Kami area that had not built latrines, at a further community meeting this was discussed and a separate sub-committee was formed for the Kami community - led by a Kami man. In this sub-committee the Kami felt they could discuss freely, even the women, and they have now made their own decision to build

latrines, as well as to initiate other activities. Confidence gained in their own committee meetings is also allowing them to speak more in the wider community meetings. This model seems to have worked very well, and has been followed for some activities in other areas also; for instance, in one area a separate Adult Literacy Class was held, and in another area the Kami community are now collecting their own funds for activities.

Secondly, community leaders and project staff recognize that the primary concern of the lower caste community is subsistence and income generation. As one local leader said:

"Most of the castes are interested in participating in the program: but Damais(tailor caste) are ***very poor*** *and they cannot spare the time to attend committee meetings and participate in development activities. There is some hope for change in their attitudes though - they said if they could have sewing machines, it would help a lot to improve their financial situation. So the project has promised to send them for knitting, sewing and cutting training - so they are more hopeful now"*

The project has responded to requests for training with the offer of training in sewing, knitting, and more recently in bamboo cultivation. In the low caste community where the HBCCC activities broke down, there is now knitting training, and separate mothers' classes. It is hoped that these will later influence the development of the HBCCC again.

This project's experience is that it has been harder to involve the low caste groups than the higher castes - who have been able to benefit more from the program to date.

It has identified the need to work separately with the low caste sections of the community, while still remaining committed to the development of the total community. It has raised the issue of whether children ***are*** the appropriate entry point for a low caste community - or whether income generation activities would be more relevant: and has found that if the children's activities are not successful then other activities are also affected.

VILLAGE LIFE IN CHANGE.....

"When we came up the path to the village, we used to walk on the wall, and hold our noses, because of the smell! ... Now we have latrine: we do not have to do that."

The first activity of the project in many areas has been latrine building: in other areas it came a little later. In some villages it is several years now since the latrines were built, and some are rotten, or full, and communities plan for rebuilding. Some people still do not like to use the latrines, but on the whole acceptance has been good and parents tell of their children teaching them of the need to use them.

Water supply is a very central issue in all of these villages - many hours a day having been spent by the women carrying water from sources sometimes one or two hours away. Initially at the start of discussions about the program, local communities were asking Redd Barna for water supplies to be provided: later, they understood that in Redd Barna's philosophy and approach the project provided only water pipes and water technicians. The villagers themselves dug the channels for the pipes, provided the porters, and organized themselves for Users'Committees

and maintenance of the system. The water schemes have had a profound effect on the daily life of women specially, but also on wider attitudes. One elderly man recounts:

"We used to say, if God gives the water, then water will come and people of Bharte (our village) can have water... There is no comparison between gods and humans of course, but now, since Redd Barna has come, because of these humans there is water at every house - enough to drink, to wash, to clean, to grow grains and vegetables....Its good for everyone, ***everyone*** *benefits - even the animals and birds - now they can get water here, they also do not need to go any where else. Its difficult to be clean without water, to keep houses clean and clothes washed...The women used to be so busy in the past just to get water - but now they have time to learn to read, to attend adult literacy classes, to look after the children better, to keep the children and our homes clean. What do we need more than this ? - water supply is one of the biggest things. But the* ***most*** *important work is that the children should be kept clean and well cared for -we should focus on children and their mothers.... If they are not there, what is the need for water ? "*

This man felt that the villagers' experiences of the water system have had an effect on peoples' thinking about fate, about God, about development:

"Now we don't say "If God wants us to have water then we can have water". God is also there, God is definitely there, but we have to remember God, ***and*** *make an effort and work. Without making an effort God will not do things for us - the practical day to day work* ***we*** *must do. What we feel is that in our social system no one should oppress any one else : oppression is one of the biggest crimes. We should think about doing good for ourselves without harming others, then all will*

benefit: God will be satisfied, the people will be satisfied, and all will be happy."

In this society the caste system is very strong. In this area of Lamjung the majority of the population are of the Gurung ethnic subgroup, but high caste Brahmin and Chhetri groups, and low caste craftsmen and laboring groups, are also present. Several village leaders reflected on what is happening to the caste system: one drew parallels between the development process for women, and that for low caste groups:

"Previously, women were not involved in development work, they were not even allowed out of the house... Now they are, and we are all benefitting. So its the same with the low caste groups - we did not include them in the past, or take their advice. But now their children and our children are in CCC together, are studying together. If their children also qualify, they will gain confidence and participate more in society.... It would definitely be helpful to have different castes, different groups, different levels, involved in leadership for the development of our society."

Another high caste village leader felt his own thinking ***had*** changed, and was inclined to think that it was hard for the lower caste groups ***themselves*** to adjust to the differences:

"Now I have realized that this area can not be developed unless ***every*** *level - rich, poor, different castes, different groups, - of people participate in this work... Gradually the lower caste people* ***are*** *coming up, but they have been suppressed for a long time and its hard for them to adjust to being with the higher castes. It is a great change that different caste people sit together in the literacy classes and the fathers' meetings".*

Another village leader (again not low caste) saw the Redd Barna Program as being instrumental in breaking down the caste system over time:

"Some years ago our system was different, and we were strict about the caste system. If we touched a Kami or Sarki (low caste) person we had to take a bath or clean ourselves with holy water. Sometimes I think that our country is under developed because of this caste system. It creates differences of opinion, and thinking, and causes conflict between communities.... I think its not possible to run this kind of program (Redd Barna's) if you follow the caste system strictly, because the program is for all groups, all levels. If this kind of program continues on, I think after thirty or forty years the caste system will be finished: it will take that long to change the whole of societies' thinking towards the caste system."

What has brought about these changes in thinking about the caste system? How has the CBCD Project affected this thinking?

Community members spoke of the effect of having their children playing and studying together in HBCCC and CCC, and of their parents being jointly, involved in common parenting issues - sitting together, in parents groups, and Adult Literacy Classes. One Brahmin man, who had been sent to Kathmandu for carpentry training, along with two low caste men found it initially difficult to cook together, eat together and stay together with men from lower castes: and others on observation tours found it strange at first to eat together in a hotel or restaurant - but later felt good about it. In the orientation for observation tours there is discussion about this, to help members to face their feelings before the event. One man summed up the reasons for change:

"I think there are several reasons why people aren't so strict about the caste system now: one is literacy and education: the second is this Redd Barna Program: and the third is contact with people and ideas from outside, from different places and countries....."

However, despite the perception of the higher caste community of a softening in the caste system, the project's experience of working with higher and lower caste groups, and the progress they have been able to make in their own development, is very different: and members of the lower caste community did not express similar views about change in the caste structure.

In terms of the role of women in decision making in the village two areas of change were reported. Firstly, within their own homes women reported that their husband now discussed more with them about important decisions in the family - for instance, the childrens' schooling, or financial issues. Secondly, women now participate much more in village meetings where issues of concern and importance are raised, and plans and solutions sought. They now have a choice to voice their opinions on the matter, and since in these meetings some degree of consensus is usually sought, this is significant.

The CBCDP has not sought to directly affect traditional views on caste, or fate, or decision making practices. It ***has*** directly sought, however, the inclusion of women and lower caste group members in the community's development activities: and this focus has not changed significantly throughout the life of the project.

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SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS IN CHANGE.....

One concern with this program has been - what will happen to these children who have participated in Child Care Programs, where there has been much stimulation, creative play, and language skills emphasized, when they enter the schooling system, with its strong ethos of didactic learning ?

One teacher spoke of the differences he noted in children coming into Class one who had attended the Child Care Centre:

"These children from the Child Care Centre ask more questions..."

It is not difficult to imagine that these children - curious, questioning, interactive, could come to be viewed as disruptive and difficult compared to other more passive pupils. In fact most teachers are positive about the effects they see in children of attendance at CCC:

"I notice that the children coming from the Child Care Centre are more polite and clean, they speak more Nepali,

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and they mix better with other children in a group for play: the children who have not had the opportunity for Child Care Centre do not mix so well, their behavior is rough and their language (Nepali) is less"

As a result of this concern fifteen-day training courses for Class One teachers have been carried out by the project since 1992.

In the Nepali village system primary school teachers receive no obligatory teacher training. For most of them they complete their own School Leaving Certificate and then start a teaching job. The teachers themselves speak of their own difficulties before training:

"I did not know any interesting teaching methods before. It was very hard - both for me and for the children, to pass the time in a class. It was monotonous. Our classes were only 45 minutes but I could not think how to fill that time! Now I can have one and a half hours and I and the students still enjoy it.... Before, I also did not know how to judge whether students were understanding the class or not, or how to encourage them to participate in it. I also did not know how to deal with children with behavior problems, like stealing...."

The training given to these teachers by project staff was an initial 2 weeks, followed by a third week later. Methods used were group discussion, role play, and practice teaching, and much was done in small groups. The training content emphasized communication skills, normal child development, use of games and stories, lesson planning and different teaching methods. Practical issues of poor school conditions and inadequate numbers of teaching staff were discussed, and the project subsequently provided some simple furniture to the schools concerned.

Apart from the teachers' own increased job satisfaction and confidence which they express as following their training, one head master reflected on changes he sees in the class and in the childrens' social behavior after that class's teacher received training:

"Certainly its different now. I have noticed that this new method emphasizes teaching as a ***group****. Students participate much better and enjoy to stay longer in the classes. Also I have noticed they are more helpful to each other..."*

A trained Class One teacher echoes this:

"I have noticed differences in the childrens' behavior. They are playing more in a group now, more willing to share with each other, to help each other, to co-operate together. Recently a child found five rupees and he gave it to us. That certainly would not have happened before. They are more helpful if another child loses something now ....."

Teachers spoke too of how the training had also affected their relationships with their own children at home. One male teacher said:

"Since I have taken the classes I spend time in the evenings with my children and use these methods. I used to keep my eldest daughter with my parents - she is scared of me - but now the youngest three are much closer to me as we spend time together....."

Teachers also spoke of increased Nepali language skills in the children, and of more regular attendance at school by those children coming:

"I think its not only the new teaching methods but many factors which have helped to improve the children's class

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attendance. The mothers' literacy classes and mothers' groups have helped ***mothers*** *to understand that their children should go to school regularly and on time. So we should thank the mothers too for their help! Before, the children used to turn up late around eleven or twelve o'clock; but nowadays they come on time for 9 or 10 am. I have noticed this change in time and regularity and feel it is a great achievement .... Of the hundred and fifty children, about two thirds now come regularly- it used to be only about one third. Also they are coming for admission earlier - they used to come at age 8 or 9 - now more are coming at age 5 or 6 years. "*

"We used to punish students if they made a mistake; but now I have learned not to do that. That also helps students to be more regular..."

"Parents are definitely sending their daughters to school more than before...."

These impressions of increased school attendance, and improved regularity in school attendance, obviously have profound implications. **But still the program is only reaching class 1 teachers - what happens after that?** One class 2 teacher reflects on the children coming to him from the new methods in Class 1:

Now there is concern for the Class Two teachers who are receiving these children, who have studied in Class One under the new method; there has not yet been any training for them. One Class Two teacher found:

"We do not always have sufficient teachers for every lesson. These new children do not fight and quarrel with each other if the teacher is not in the class so much as before...They are also already reading simple words and making different words from one letter."

But a head master expressed his concern:

*"These children **can** sit and learn in Class Two and Three and so on, but what is the point of the new method if we can not continue it beyond Class One ? "*

How has the Project grown and changed in its relationship to the established educational system? In the original proposal, it was not envisaged that there would be ***any*** direct activity with the schools. However, it became clear that there were profound differences in philosophy and approach to learning between the project child care programs and the primary school system, and it was realized that something of the effectiveness of the learning methods in the CCC system could be taught to the teachers also. This of course, on a wider scale, raises radical questions about teaching styles in the educational system in Nepal: and on a smaller scale, in the project area, raises the need for training for teachers not only in class 1 but throughout the primary system. At present there are plans to extend training to class 2 teachers also.

The issue of improved school attendance is a vital one. The project impacts on this is several ways: the childrens' familiarity (from CCC) with a learning environment: their improved social and language skills; the changes in their parents' attitudes to schooling, especial for girls; and the more enjoyable and less punitive teaching methods of teachers. As teachers' training extends to other classes also this needs further study.

WHAT IS GOOD CHILD DEVELOPMENT?.....

In any child development work its important to know whether the values and attitudes towards good child development of the project staff coincide with, or conflict with, those of the community. We have already haeard something of what children in Lamjung feel they need for their own and their siblings' development. **What do the adults see as necessary for their childrens' good development?**

For fathers, a very primary concern was education. All spoke of the need for good teachers and schooling, and for knowledge for their children. They also spoke of the need for Nepali Language. Economic security was seen as a priority, as was good food. One father mentioned the need for love and attachment, but mainly the fathers focused on behaviour. They said:

"I think that for good development of our children they need good teachers. Often the teachers aren't qualified and can't teach properly. Not only good teachers but a good atmosphere at school is needed..... Both mothers and fathers should help in their development too - they should use good language, teach good behaviour, provide a good environment."

"Children need good care, good food, good hygiene. They need their mothers' love and care. They need a good environment at home and school and good education. But in the beginning parents teach them, so they should teach them good behaviour....."

"The children need adults to behave nicely to them. They need good education: I think education is the best way to improve their behaviour. The main duty of parents is to take good care of children, provide them with good food, and good clothes. Its important that they themselves should be a good example to the children to improve their behaviour...."

Women were also concerned about education and schooling, but focused more on parental influence on the child:

"The first teachers of a child are the mother and father; so parents should teach their children good behaviour and nice speech. Home is the first school - so parents should teach their children not to quarrel, that they shouldn't tell lies. Its the parents' responsibility to teach them good manners."

"First children need nutritious food. Then, teach them to play for the development of their brain and body. Teach them good manners..... Before 5 years home is the first school to learn to develop..... Parents should give them their own example - in manners, language, healthy living - then they can adjust out side of the home too. If we care for them with love, they will learn something: if we behave rudely with them, they will learn that and behave that way outside of home also. If something is wrong parents should tell them calmly, not hit them. Appreciation is a must for a child's development."

"Children need to develop their hands and their feet, their body and their nerves, - then they will be able to think well."

As for the fathers, the children's speech and behaviour were seen as a major focus for the mothers, but they also spoke of children's need of love and encouragement, of praise, and of explanation when they don't understand:

"Parents can teach good speech and behaviour. We need to speak gently with our children, not make them afraid, not scold them when they do something wrong but explain to them...."

Others also echoed this attitude to discipline.....:

"If children do something wrong then you should explain to them they shouldn't do it..... that others will scold their parents if they do it..... We have to keep telling them day by day and love them a lot. They need love, not hitting. We shouldn't hit them unless it happens again and again and again...."

"If children are loved and praised they'll have confidence.... otherwise its bad for their future: they will be afraid and will feel depressed, feel that they can't do anything..... If they can't tell their troubles to their parents, they won't be able to study, to be clever....."

"If a child is upset, we need to think - why? what happened? If they don't want to go to school, may be they don't have a pen to go with?..... If the child can't speak to his father and tell him what he needs directly, then his mother should speak for him....."

What about the project staff? What do they feel is necessary for good child development?

Staff mentioned good nutrition and hygiene, but focused much *less* on behaviour and much ***more*** on psychological needs.....:

"These children need practical skills and stimulation: but especially they need love, encouragement, freedom to speak their inner minds and their anxieties without fear."

"Children also need hugging and special attention. They also need to have their curiosity encouraged.... "

Although there was a good deal of overlap in ideas between parents and staff, so too, between staff and fathers particularly there was a marked difference in emphasis given to psychological or emotional, and practical needs. This could reflect the harsh reality for these fathers of subsistence living, and anxieties about practical provision of shelter, food, and clothing for their children - but the mothers also face these realities, and their perceptions were different. The strong emphasis on correct behaviour by both fathers and mothers was also not reflected in staff comments.

As for children's perceptions, it will be important to watch for changes in the adults' and staff's ideas and understanding of children's developmental needs over the project's lifespan.

A song written by the leader of the project for use in parent's education classes also reflects those values:

Childrens' Development Song

Chorus:

We all should unite for the work of
Our childrens' development.....

We must not forget that
Luck or destiny doesn't just come from birth
Its source is in our hands.
So we must work for our childrens'
development...

If you are telling your children lies
you shouldn't be surprised if they lie to
you Because they learn from you.
So we must work to change these habits....
We must work for our childrens'
development....

We mustn't scold our children
Instead we should give them love....
We must work for our children's
development....

Our resource for the future is our children
We must preserve those resources.
We must take care of them very carefully
until they flower...
We must work for our children's
development....

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LESSONS LEARNT.....

"When I came to Lamjung, I thought there is so much malnutrition, the women are so backward, the village is so dirty.... Can there really be change? Now I can give an example that change is possible. I've learned much more than I have taught. People told me before I came that "Gurungs are like sheep"! Now I know that yes, if they don't understand, they can't do: and it takes a long time to understand because of language. I've had to learn a lot.... But now I know change is possible." (Child Development Worker, Lamjung District.")

It is four years now since the Community Based Child Development Project began in Lamjung District of Nepal. Where is the project now? What has been achieved and what issues and questions raised? What questions remain unanswered? Do the project's objectives as written before the start of the work, bear any resemblance to the reality on the ground? What has been learnt?

This project, like all others, has faced problems. The drinking water supply component faced major difficulties at

one point when it was discovered that the wrong weight and size of pipe had been laid throughout a whole Village Development Committee area: necessitating the community carrying, digging, and laying replacement pipes - a huge amount of work. At times, staff continuity has been a problem - in one village they have seen four different Child Development Workers in their community during the project's life time, and with gaps in between. It is also not always easy to find suitable field staff, and occasionally there are staff relationship difficulties - though remarkably few, and these are addressed in regular staff meetings. On one occasion anonymous letters complaining about the project were sent to government offices - probably related to a powerful person's daughter not being selected for a staff post. And so on and so on..... all problems of life and growth, and not unusual in the Nepali context.

Despite these, the project has had some remarkable effects. Parents are consistently clear about the beneficial changes for their children. Mothers express new confidence in their abilities as women, and in their role in the community, and are participating in leadership of project activities. The fathers' education groups, unique in Nepal, are raising awareness of child development and needs, and fathers are expressing changes in their thinking (as well as showing changes), and in their relationships to both their children and their wives. Family dynamics and decision making

Family dynamics and decision making practices are changing. Children are becoming educators - to their siblings and to their parents, - and are also change agents in their schools and with their teachers.

practices are changing. Children are becoming educators - to their siblings and to their parents, - and are also change agents in their schools and with their teachers. Literacy rates in women and school attendance in girls have risen dramatically, and piped water supplies allow women some freedom of time to address other areas of work, and their own development. Latrine building has helped to improve village hygiene, and teachers satisfaction and the regularity of children's attendance has increased in primary school education.

There are of course exceptions, and, in particular, the lower caste groups have moved more slowly, have needed more time and support and input, and in one or two areas have only had limited participation in the project, or participation has not been maintained. Different approaches have been tried, and creative and appropriate ways of working with these communities still need to be experimented with. There are other examples of non inclusiveness, though few, - in disability, and amongst temporary residents.

How have the original objectives and plans of the project corresponded to the realities now present?

Overall objectives for this work were firstly, to create awareness of the need for better child care, and secondly, to improve the quality of life for children within the community and at home. Certainly adults in Lamjung are "talking child development" - in their parents meetings, in their Child Care Committee meetings, in their community planning; and in interviews with parents it was clear from the ease of discussion that these were issues and questions they have talked about often before. Quality of life for the children cannot be firmly evaluated here - but children enthusiastically expressed their enjoyment of Child Care

and Child to Child Classes; more children, especially girls, are going to school; and parents feel that the quality of lives of their children has improved. A third general goal was to motivate rural people in participating in Community Based Child Development activities. The vast majority of adults in the project area now participate in running Home Based Child Care Centres, in Committees for Child Care support, in parents education groups, or in other activities to support the child development program. The fourth general goal, of educating community members in group work so that it may be used for their own welfare is an integral basis of all the other activities. All planning for activities is done in community meetings: all child care groups have supervisory and supportive committees: mothers and fathers learn in participatory style parents' education classes: and Adult Literacy Classes are also participatory. Project staff are trained to be facilitators of groups, rather than didactic teachers; and more recently women are using the group meetings of the Womens Self Help Center to work for their own security and development.

The specific goals which were defined have also, in many areas, been met. Of course, they are also ongoing as new areas and villages start activities. Two goals that are still at an early stage are the development of kitchen gardens and of protected areas of forest: and the goal of women to improve their financial condition through income generating activities. Both are already happening but only to a limited extent. The training programs for primary school teachers, and the support and enablement of a Women's Self Help Centre were not envisaged in the project's goals.

What has it meant to have children as the entry point of the project in Lamjung?

The children have brought new ideas and ways into their homes, in non-challenging ways that can be "heard" and accepted by parents.

Firstly, it has meant an entry point that *all* adults - of all castes, ethnic groups, and ages, and both sexes, have agreed is very important to them. It is also an entry point that all see as an investment for the future as well as of benefit in the present. Children are deeply loved and treasured in Nepal, so it is also an entry point with a strong and positive emotional bond for the adults, which seems in this project to have, in many places, transcended other decisive splits. It is also a non threatening entry point for adults - not directly addressing their felt deficiencies or weaknesses, but rather starting with an area of pride and value - their children. Although, in one village, men expressed feelings that initially they were neglected by the project, and women favored, in general the activities for mothers have been well supported by all - again being seen as a further aspect to care and development of the children. Fathers who would not have met on equal basis in any other meeting, have sat together to learn about their shared interest and concern - their children. The children have brought new ideas and ways into their homes, in non-challenging ways that can be "heard" and accepted by parents - where had they come through an outside adult, this acceptance might not have been possible. This child - centeredness has been the basis for other activities also - for new crops and vegetables for nutrition: for water supplies and latrines for hygiene: for adult literacy. It is not possible to say whether or not the work of this project could have been achieved with a different entry point: but it *is* possible to say that

this entry point - the children - has been an emotionally involving, unifying, and non threatening one to the adults in the communities in Lamjung.

However, in one low caste village the rifts in relationships between mothers caused the child focused activities to fail, and the lower rate of participation of lower caste groups in these activities raises the question of whether, for them, children are ***not*** the best entry point; whether income generation or service activities that met some of their subsistence needs might be more effective and appropriate.

The direct focus on children has also emphasized their role as possible change agents. This is most direct in the child to child classes where children are specifically encouraged to share what they learn with others - their siblings, their parents, their neighbors. But there is evidence that they are also affecting their teachers as they enter school, as the teachers respond and adjust their teaching styles to deal with children who are curious - who question and discuss. This impact the children have is certainly in the area of information - facts they have learnt in their classes and child care; but it is also in the area of values and attitudes. Children who wish to discuss and question, who want to spend leisure time learning new skills *do* effect change in their parents.

In Nepal the focus of education is very much on the didactic learning of information, and the student's role is generally a passive one. For children fortunate enough to receive schooling, educational expectations are high. **In the child care of this project, it could have been expected that the very different approaches to learning used might have met some lack of confidence or challenge in** the community. An approach that emphasizes play, and

toys, and story telling, and active participation, is far from the usual educational system. However, although mothers active in the HBCCs spoke of some children being afraid of the toys at first, all mothers spoke appreciatively of the value and importance of the toys for their children, and no negative responses were expressed. The box of toys given to each HBCC by the project is the ***only*** material incentive given; all other facilities being provided by the villagers themselves; and it may be that this in itself helps the acceptability of the toys.

The other place where a conflict between the approaches of the project to learning, and the traditional educational approaches might have been expected is, of course, when the children enter primary school. Although the project had not planned for this originally, the concern about this prompted a change and growth in the activities of the project, and the start of training for primary school teachers. This is now a growing area of work, with many requests from schools in the area for training for their staff. The increased job satisfaction and confidence of the teachers after training is striking. Teachers speak also of improvement in the school attendance and regularity of children in their classes, which although not investigated here, is a highly significant observation. The CBCD project has learnt that, although unplanned, their interface with the school system is vitally important, and has grown to meet this.

Concepts of what comprises good child development, what a childs' life should be, and what is needed for that development to occur, are grounded in cultural values. A concern for this project has been whether the project staff's views and concepts are similar to, or in conflict with, those of the local community. Certainly, at this moment in the project's evolution, there *are* differences in the emphasis

given to different factors allowing for good child development between staff and parents. "Correct behaviour" - a strong concern for parents, was not emphasized by staff, who focused much more on emotional and psychological needs. But parents also showed marked differences, fathers focusing much more on the child's practical needs: mothers also emphasizing the need for love, gentle discipline, praise. It will be important to revaluate these differences later in the life of the project.

Focusing on the role of men as fathers is one of the unique feature of the Lamjung program.

Another very important feature of the Lamjung program is its focus on *parents*, rather than only mothers: and the corresponding focus on men as ***fathers***, rather than primarily as community leaders or members. There has been change in this area over time. It was always envisaged that there would be parents' education classes for men as well as for women; but in the early stages of the project, for various reasons, men were usually included later than women in the projects activities - though not in its planning. Fathers' classes were often less frequent than mothers', and in some instances men felt excluded. Over time the fathers' meetings have become higher focus - also starting early in the project's activities in an area, and being enthusiastically received by the men, as well as much enjoyed by the project staff. Men have begun to make suggestions themselves as to what topics they want to included in their classes, and perceive improvement in their relationships to their children. This experience of men in village Nepal meeting specifically to learn about, and discuss, the needs and development of their children, and their roles and skills

as fathers is a powerful and unique one. It may also be a transitional one. In the village in which the project has worked for the longest time and where the parents' education classes (both mothers' and fathers') have now covered all the proposed curriculum, men and women have recently started meeting ***together***. One father or mother prepares a topic (on a subject previously covered) and presents it to the group for discussion of what is now actually happening about this in their village - what problems do they face? How much has been implemented? The decision to do this has come from the parents.

Perhaps for the women in this project, more than for any other group, the effects of group work are most striking. Through group meetings women have found a solidarity, and a support for one another, that has given them confidence to consider their role and place in their society, and the future role of their daughters. It is women in this project who most clearly state just how much they feel they have changed, and how much more confidence they have in themselves as women and as mothers. Undoubtably the skills of Nepali language and literacy are crucial in this, and in allowing the women more contact with the wider world. The field trips have made that contact a reality - but were not an originally planned project activity, rather one that the project has realized to be important as the work has progressed. The Womens Self Help Centre was also not a planned project activity, and even now is not directly a project activity: rather a parallel movement supported and encouraged by the project. It seems important that it remain separate and parallel, maybe in time to take on some of the activities that at present belong with the project.

Probably the most difficult area of learning for this CBCDP has been in its work with low caste groups

within the community. This "community" is, in reality, comprised of several groups, not one, and in talking of a "community based approach" that has to be recognized. The project has moved from trying to deal always with the community as one - in planning, meetings etc; to recognizing that the needs of the lower caste groups are different in these areas, and that therefore a different approach is required. This has allowed for separate meetings, committees, fund raising, literacy classes and income generating training activities to be held in some low caste groups; with much better success. The project holds to the original philosophy that change must occur in ***all*** sectors of the community, and therefore wishes to work with all sectors; but now recognizes the need for differing approaches. It seems likely that, rather than a child focused entry point, an income generating focus might be more acceptable to the low-caste community as this is their expressed felt need. At the present time it is unlikely that the low caste groups - the poorest in the community - are benefiting most from the project, although, of course, that would be the project's desire.

The project has had many indirect effects on the local community. As family communication patterns have changed, so too has family decision making. Village decision making has also altered with the participation of women in village meetings. There are effects on world-views, and on views of fate, and personal responsibility. Some members of the community feel that caste laws have softened through the shared activities of parents and children. Higher caste community leaders voice support for the development of the lower-caste groups. But four years is a short time, and no clear patterns can be drawn.

As in any other project, the staff are the key factor to the success or failure of the work. Who are the staff in

this Community Based Child Development Project, and what are their needed qualities? What is their training?

A clear code of conduct, a strong commitment and dedication to promote "family environment", open communication, trust, respect, equity and cooperation amongst staff are seen as strong factors contributing to the success of the program.

The total staffing of the project is 16, of whom ten are field based Child Development Workers (CDWs) - living in their village areas. These are all young women, from different ethnic groups and areas of Nepal, and all have passed School Leaving Certificate (tenth grade) at school. The majority have not had previous development work experience and are trained on site by the Project Administrator by discussion and modelling. Their selection process is rigorous, with two interviews, a week long field experience visit, and a final interview. They are then on probation for six months. There is a strong ethos of commitment and dedication, and a clear "code of conduct" for staff that includes living at the community's level and being appropriate in food and clothing; a commitment to a "family environment" amongst staff, of open communication, trust, respect, equity and cooperation - as a model of group communication. Alcohol and cigarette use are not allowed in public. The Project Administrator maintains an "open door" to field staff at all times, to discuss their work or problems, and herself visits project areas frequently; regular staff meetings are also held. The enthusiasm and level of communication among staff is striking, and while each has a clear job description

and their own working area for which they are responsible, discussion of individual work situations is very common so that all staff have knowledge of others' areas also. In the Nepali context, for young and unmarried woman to be living alone in a village area not their own, is unusual and can be very difficult. Staff described the community's initial reactions - especially the men - as sometimes disrespectful, and feel they have had to earn their trust and respect. In this, support of the staff "family" to the Child Development Workers has been vital. Their training has included child development, child care and stimulation methods, communication skills, group facilitation, teaching methods and much else - all taught through discussion, participation, and modelling. The vision, drive, and communication and development skills of the Project Administrator are obviously fundamental to other staff functioning in the project, and she has been in charge of the project since its inception - having previously been involved in it's planning and in the selection of the project site. This continuity, combined with her considerable personal leadership skills, have allowed the community to develop very open communication with her and the project, and trust in her. It is unlikely that the project would have moved so far, in such a comparatively short time, without such strong leadership. The relatively close correlation between the project's original objectives and the current reality could suggest an imposed model, or an inability to respond to the situation; but the changes that ***have*** occurred and the obviously wide acceptance of, and participation in, the project by the community suggest more a project planned in the reality of experience in other rural areas of Nepal.

CONCLUSIONS

In any development project there is a flow of history, an evolution, that encompasses the community, the project staff, the activities, and attitudes.... What is written here about the Lamjung CBCD project of Nepal, is written out of only one stage in that evolution. At the time of writing this project is not yet five years old. Yet in its relatively short life, this work, with its community based approach and child focus, has seen remarkable growth and striking changes, in the communities in which it works. To walk into the project area, from villages outside of it, is to be struck immediately by the difference in the children, even on the path: their better nutrition, their cleanliness, their friendliness and openness to strangers, their confidence to greet and interact with adults. To spend time in one of the project area villages is to be with women who no longer cover their faces with their shawl - if they speak at all (which is unusual in other villages) - but who are confident enough to greet, and sit with, and ask questions of, a visitor. As one woman described it, "The change in the women is like the difference between earth and sky....."

There is much yet to be done, and areas of failure to learn from, and change to effect. The most obvious areas of

change that have already occurred in the project from its original planning are the increased focus on mens' groups, and on the mens' roles and needs as fathers; the involvement in training of primary school teachers; and the support for the locally formed Women's Self Help Center. The area of greatest concern and ongoing change is that of working with the low-caste groups in the community, with whom progress has been slowest, and yet whose needs are greatest.

Was this to have been written in 5 years time, no doubt other changes would have occurred, and new concerns be expressed by the staff and the community. As a Nepali proverb says:

"If you have clothes, then you can feel it's cold. If you have no clothes, its better to feel it's not cold".

In the CBCD Project area, in the past, people have accepted the limitations to childrens' development imposed by parental illiteracy, poverty, the attitudes of society to girls, the caste system, the lack of child care facilities adequate schooling, and other factors, as an inevitable fact of life, and have not called them deprivation. Now, with the changes brought about so far, and the establishment of the child care centers, parents' groups, literacy classes, child to child classes, Women's Self Help groups etc., they are able to look more at the "cold" and consider what they themselves want to see for their children's future.

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APPENDIX I

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY BASED CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, LAMJUNG

The overall objectives for this Community Based Child Development Program were defined in the initial planning as four-fold:

Firstly, to create awareness of the need for better child care, since, so often, small children were being cared for by a bigger sibling who might be only two or three years older than those they looked after.

Secondly, to improve the quality of life of the children within the community and at home.

Thirdly, to motivate rural people in participating in community based child development activities.

And lastly, to educate community members in group work so they may, and can, use it for their own welfare.

Specific goals were also defined, as follows:-

1. To help mothers organise themselves into small groups to run Home Based Child Care projects.

2. To assist the community to organise a self reliant Child Care Centre.

3. To support the community so that they may understand the value of nutrition and start their own kitchen gardens.

4. To provide health education for the parents.

5. To start and assist Functional Literacy Classes.

6. To offer Chelibeti Classes for young girls (Functional literacy) who have missed the opportunity to attend the regular school.

7. To help the community members maintain personal as well as environmental hygiene.

8. To support the existing primary schools, and improve the quality of education, and encourage parents to send their children to school.

9. To start community supported pre-primary school classes.

10. To help women improve their financial condition through Income Generating activities.

11. To encourage the community to protect their water sources and if necessary to build improved water systems.

12. To encourage and motivate the community to plan, protect, and be responsible for forested areas in their vicinity.

APPENDIX II

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY BASED CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The main areas of activities of the project are here considered in more detail:

1. HOME BASED CHILD CARE CENTRE (HBCCC)

A group of five or six mothers is formed, all of whom have one or more children in the 0-3 years age group: and one of the mother's homes is identified (or another house) as the future site of the Home Based Child Care Centre (HBCCC). These mothers then receive five days training from project staff about child development, communication, and stimulation: about simple creative play and the use of local resources for toys: about "super flour porridge" for daily feeding to the children at the HBCCC, and about Oral Rehydration Therapy for diarrhoea: and about personal hygiene and sanitation. Activities to encourage language and motor coordination skills are also taught: and mothers learn about immunisations. Fathers also learn to make toys locally for the HBCCC - from bamboo, corn cobs, and other available materials. These mothers' 0-3 year old children then come to the HBCCC daily (for six days a week) where each day a different mother cares for the group: leaving the other mothers free to do their household and field work. At present forty-two HBCCCs are functioning with approximately two hundred and eighty mothers and three hundred children involved: and each HBCCC is supervised and supported by a "Helper

Committee" of community members who do not have children in this age group. This committee also maintains a fund for any needs the HBCCC has, and money is collected for this by parents, dancing and singing at festival times for money.

2. Child Care Centres (CCC)

If communities are ready, child care activities can then be extended for three to six year old children in CCCs. For these the community must provide a site - in some places this is a simple bamboo hut: in others a permanent building. They also must provide simple materials and mats, and identify a possible teacher, of at least sixth class schooling background. This person is then given two weeks training by project staff which is followed up by supervision two times a month initially, and less frequently later as the teacher becomes more experienced. These Child Care Centres then have twenty to thirty children attending daily in each centre, and they follow school hours. However, the activities are a mixture of games, and group play, as well as story telling and some initial reading preparation. The childrens' interaction in the group is emphasised.

The project is responsible to meet the monthly salary of the teacher for the first five years, and to provide training and a trunk of toys and other materials suitable for three to six year olds. These CCCs also have a Committee from the community who are responsible for the running of the centre, and also for the collecting of grains at harvest time each year from each family with children at the centre. These grains are enough to provide for a daily meal for the children throughout the year. This is cooked at the Centre each day by a helper or by one of the

mothers. This Committee also manages funds for the Centre which are collected through local fund raising efforts by the parents, which will provide for the teacher's salary after Redd Barna withdraws, so giving sustainability. At present there are 5 CCCs with approximately 120 children participating.

3. Parents' Education Classes

Mothers' meetings, and fathers' meetings, are held separately by project staff usually on a once or twice a month basis, though initially it may even be weekly. Numbers attending vary according to the size of the village but commonly twenty to forty people will be present in the meetings which are held at the village's "chautara" - the big tree and resting place that is the common meeting ground for all. Subjects covered in the initial thirty one lessons include hygiene and sanitation, health, nutrition, pregnancy and child birth, child development, child care, alcohol and cigarettes, women's roles in society, environmental issues such as tree planting and smokeless stoves etc. Simple posters on the theme of that particular class are given to the mothers and fathers to take home. Discussion and active participation by group members is encouraged, and local attitudes and beliefs and examples are discussed freely, as is the progress of the other project activities. At present there are fifty seven parent-groups with approximately twelve to thirteen hundred parents attending.

4. Child to Child Education ("Bhai-Bahini" or "Little Brother-Little Sister Classes")

At present twenty four Child to Child classes are running with around one thousand children involved. These

classes are for the 11-15 year old children although 9 and 10 year olds also come. Each child participating is then responsible as a "child volunteer" to teach one or two other households what he or she has learnt. After each class the child receives a small poster to help them to show and teach others. In these classes they learn about communication: personal and village hygiene: treatment of diarrhoea, skin infections and injuries; pregnancy and child birth: nutrition and healthy foods; the forest and the environment: disability and the child care of younger siblings. Values are also discussed, such as honesty and not telling lies, helping at home, keeping clean, teaching others what they have learned, frankness, trust, and respect.

Models are used of 2 model child volunteers - a boy, Santosh, and a girl, Kamala: and over the weeks the children hear of Kamala and Santosh's activities to help others in their village: and in games, role plays, and discussions apply their examples to their own lives.

5. FUNCTIONAL LITERACY CLASSES

Functional Literacy Classes are of two types: one for adults, and another for teenage girls who have not had schooling ("Cheli-Beti"). This is a common situation where the girls usually carry heavy household responsibilities from an early age. They frequently care for younger siblings, do house and field work, carry water and cut firewood. They are frequently kept out of school in order to do these duties especially in the poorer families and then are married at a young age - only 12 or 13 years. Classes for these girls aim to give basic skills of reading, writing, and simple arithmetic, as well as awareness raising exercises, during a six month program of daily two hour lessons which follows

a set series of 180 classes. There is a course book provided to each girl, designed by another project, and methods include song and dance as well as a more traditional teacher-student approach. The medium is Nepali language which is also often new for the participants. Parents are motivated to admit their daughters to the local schools after the six month courses finish - and some do. At present 6 of these groups have been run with an average of 20 girls present per group. There are also boys attending occasionally - only 4 to date.

Functional Adult Literacy classes (FALC) aim to give literacy skills, but also to be a forum where participants can work towards community development. These classes are attended predominantly by women but a few men also attend and in one village there is one class for men only - men, of mixed castes, came and requested this themselves. Again, classes are held for two hours per day - usually 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. - for an initial six month period; but a further course can then be requested. The teachers for these groups are minimum fifth class schooling background themselves, and are chosen by the community. As in the Cheli-Beti classes women teachers are preferred, but infrequent, because of the lack of educated women in the area. Training and monthly salary is given to these teachers by the project. The initial six month course of classes follows "Naya Goreto" (New Path) - a course promoted and provided by the Ministry of Education of the Nepali Government. Settings for the classes vary - from school class rooms to an open space or field. Redd Barna provides a kerosene lamp and a blackboard. Classes are started by the singing of a song, written by the FALC teachers during their training time, which reminds the participants of their potential for change.

At present about 600 women and men (more than 50 men) have completed Functional Adult Literacy Classes, and a further 600 are participating at present. The drop out rate is very low (8%) and women attend with amazing enthusiasm and consistency at the end of a fourteen to sixteen hour day of house and field work. Where drop outs occur it is usually due to marriage or childbirth - but in some villages the communities have made a rule that no one shall drop out - and if they do, there is a fine!

6. SANITATION AND WATER

Education about latrines, and motivation to built them, is given very early emphasis by project staff in each area. Information on how to build latrines is given, and the subject discussed in the Adult Literacy classes, Child to Child classes, and Parents Education classes. In most areas latrine building has been the first or second activity undertaken by the community.

Women especially spend many hours a day fetching water for their homes, and water systems have frequently been requested very early in the project's work in an area. However, once the level of the community involvement, work and ownership is explained and understood (ie. that all labour, as well as the formation of a Water Users Committee is the community's responsibility) it is often sometime before a community is ready to actually install a new system. At that point Redd Barna provides technical supervision, pipes and other materials. At present one of the Village Development Committee areas has installed new systems or strengthened existing water systems, in all 9 wards, and 2 further Village Development Committees are starting within the near future.

7. INCOME GENERATION

At present no specific income generation programs have been initiated by the project. However, last year 3 men were sent to Kathmandu for carpentry training and one woman for tailoring training. 3 more women have recently been sent for sewing and knitting training in Kathmandu for 6 months, and training in bamboo cultivation is being considered. Issues of income generation are frequently discussed and considered in the community meetings. The project has also organized study tours of one week per year for groups of women, and from last year for men also, to visit programs in other areas of Nepal, with members of project staff. This has been an opportunity, for the women in particular, to see areas outside of Lamjung - often for the first time. Womens' development programs, literacy programs, income generation programs, and rural development programs have all been visited. The women and the men are chosen to go by the community - each mothers' group and helpers' committee sends one person: and are very interested in what they see. Some of the examples and ideas that they bring back to their own communities, can be implemented eg. controlling cattle in the forest was observed in Eastern Nepal and now two villages in Lamjung have set aside areas of land specially for the cattle.

The other aspect of income generation has been the setting up of funds for each Child Care Centre towards their future sustainability, and for each mothers' and fathers' group. The money collected - mainly by parents singing and dancing at village celebrations and festivals - is kept in a fund which in some villages is then made available for loans to people in that village. The interest rate is set by the Child Care Centre Committee. They may also - and

usually do - set a time limit on the loan. These loans have been used for personal needs, (eg. one woman setting up a small shop) - and cooperative shops, chicken and goat raising are also being considered.

8. Teacher Training Courses

All of these activities were planned in the original project proposal. However, since then, as the project has developed, two new activities have also developed.

Firstly, concern was felt that the children who attended HBCCC and CCC were entering local schools at age six, where teachers had little or no training, teaching methods were very traditional, and teaching materials minimal. CBCD Project has, therefore, instigated Teacher Training Courses for teachers of Class One level for periods of of one to two weeks. This participatory training includes observation and communication skills, stages of child development, qualities needed in teachers, story telling skills, development of games and materials from locally available items, lesson planning and practice teaching; and a session on what to do if a teacher is absent, a common occurrence in village schools where there may be more classes than teachers. The CBCD Project is also providing some furniture to these schools. This training has been felt to be very effective, and follow-up training, plus training for Class Two teachers, is now underway.

9. Womens' Self-help Centre

Another activity that has started in the last one year, is the Womens' Self Help Centre. Women were concerned about problems in their villages - their husbands drinking too much, behaving badly, some cases of physical abuse

etc. There was also a specific problem with a drunk man disturbing one of the F.A.L.C. classes which had not been resolved and threatened to cause the closure of that class.

So about 40 women held an initial meeting to discuss this and they decided to form an Non-Governmental (Voluntary) Organization. The executive committee of nine women was given 10 days training by project staff on how to deal with officials and local district offices.

The current activities of the Self Help Centre are now in several different areas. Two-monthly meetings are held where 400-500 women attend, plus there are seperate sub-meetings in different village areas. There is buying and distribution of new kinds of seeds (eg. wheat) for their villages. There is support and intervention in cases of women's problems brought to the Centre eg. financial abandonment, wife beating etc.: and intervention in village behaviours that are felt to be detrimental to the quality of life for the women and their children (eg. drunkenness and gambling by the men).

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The *Winds of Change* by Chris Wright is a descriptive account of the work of the Community Based Child Development Programme of Lamjung District of Nepal, and the changes it made on the community. Reflections on this development approach from community members, project staff and the author were documented with the hope that other development workers may find it applicable in their own areas and cultures.

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